

HOUSE JOINT RESOLUTION 581

By Cobb J

A RESOLUTION to honor the memory of the late Robert Murray Soule, Jr., for his laudable service to the Tennessee Valley Railroad Museum in Chattanooga.

WHEREAS, it is fitting that the members of this General Assembly should pause to specially recognize those estimable public servants who dedicated themselves to improving the quality of life for their fellow citizens; and

WHEREAS, one such estimable person who evinced the greatest integrity and probity in all his chosen endeavors was the late Robert Murray Soule, Jr., who, after co-founding the Tennessee Valley Railroad Museum (TVRM) in Chattanooga in 1960, expertly and passionately managed it for forty-five years; and

WHEREAS, Mr. Soule served the Museum, which was his labor of love, in a variety of leadership positions, including as TVRM's president for twenty-eight years until his death in 2006, as well as chairman of the board and as its executive director; under his astute leadership, which was strictly voluntary, TVRM grew to become the largest operating railroad museum in the South; and

WHEREAS, on March 17, 2006, TVRM Board of Directors elected to name the Museum's restoration and repair facilities in Mr. Soule's honor, a fitting tribute to a man who fervently believed that in order for the TVRM to be a self-sustaining, operating museum, it had to have its own repair and maintenance facility; to that end, he did all in his power to see that TVRM had one of the finest steam locomotives and car repair facilities in the United States; and

WHEREAS, the son of Robert Murray Soule and Katherine Park Soule, Mr. Soule was born on October 22, 1928, in Athens, Georgia; and

WHEREAS, in 1945, at the tender age of seventeen, he joined the United States Army, where he served an 18-month stint in Japan as part of the American occupation forces; after his

military service, he graduated from the University of Georgia with a bachelor's degree in physics; and

WHEREAS, he worked for General Railway Signal Corporation in Rochester, New York, and then spent the balance of his career, nearly thirty years, as Assistant Superintendent of Southern Railway Yards in Chattanooga; he retired from Norfolk Southern Railway in 1987; and

WHEREAS, a primary focus of Robert Soule was his extensive involvement and management of TVRM; the museum's goals were to, insofar as practical: preserve railroad equipment from the post-1900 period to present; restore all equipment to its original appearance and state of operation, and to operate one or more steam or diesel trains in the manner of the period; to create an historically correct short-line environment; display artifacts that relate to the history, skills, and equipment and lore of the railroad industry; and establish a reference library and cooperate with area educational institutions in promoting study of the past and present rail industry; and

WHEREAS, in 1962, Mr. Soule organized and supervised the restoration of ex-Kentucky and Tennessee Number 12 back to its original configuration as Southern Railway Locomotive Number 4501, which had been built and delivered new to the Southern Railway in 1911; and

WHEREAS, in 1968, a persuasive Mr. Soule was instrumental in obtaining a portion of the right-of-way from East Chattanooga through the Missionary Ridge Tunnel to the then missing Tunnel Boulevard Bridge, and eventually to Cromwell Road; and

WHEREAS, in spite of the objections of other TVRM board members, Mr. Soule insisted on reconstructing the 145-foot Tunnel Boulevard Bridge, which was completed in 1977, proving to be the most important event in the Museum's history; it permitted the TVRM to acquire additional right-of-way property, doubling the length of the railroad, and it provided the Museum with an easily accessible public terminus near Highway 153; and

WHEREAS, Mr. Soule developed a plan by which TVRM could produce its own source of revenue and went on to supervise the construction of an office building, a wye to turn the trains around, and an impressive 1880s style depot at the Cromwell Road location, a location in which he was instrumental in acquiring in the early 1980s; and

WHEREAS, he also saw to the completion of a small turn-of-the-century style depot, the construction and installation of the turntable, and, most importantly, the locomotive and

equipment restoration shops, which were necessary for the Museum's plan to produce its own revenue and repair its own equipment; and

WHEREAS, from the inception of TVRM, Mr. Soule's most fervent desire was to develop an operating museum, one where future generations would not only see restored locomotives and rolling stock from The Golden Age of Railroading but experience them in all their glory; and

WHEREAS, his many accomplishments aside, Mr. Soule was fortunate to share both love and companionship with his wife of forty-five years, Carolyn Joyce Hulsey, and their two children, Robert M. Soule III and Mary Penelope Soule; and

WHEREAS, Robert M. Soule, Jr., was wholly committed to the noble precepts of public service that have earned Tennessee recognition as the "Volunteer State," and he should be specially recognized; now, therefore,

BE IT RESOLVED BY THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES OF THE ONE HUNDRED FIFTH GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF TENNESSEE, THE SENATE CONCURRING, that we hereby posthumously honor Mr. Robert M. Soule, Jr., for his manifold contributions as founder and manager of Tennessee Valley Railroad Museum (TVRM) in Chattanooga, extend our gratitude for his dedication to to the Museum and our state, and honor the memory of this fine gentleman.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that an appropriate copy of this resolution be prepared for presentation with this final clause omitted from such copy.